



# THE COLLEGIATE CHURCHES OF SCOTLAND

## PART II—THEIR SIGNIFICANCE

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### I

SOME singularly inept attempts have been made, e.g., by MacEwen, to explain the Scottish collegiate churches. I confine myself to the stock misconception of their significance, viz., the assumption that the collegiate clergy served the cure of souls of the parish in which their church was situated, and thus carried on in an intensified form the parochial work of the former rector or vicar. Jessopp, writing of the English collegiate churches which arose in the reign of Edward III and later, declares :

“ The parsonages were converted into colleges . . . and the parishes, instead of having one or two clergymen, each living his lonely life and following his own way, found themselves with six or eight officiating ministers, who gave a far greater air of pomp and magnificence to the services of the church, and who were always ready at call when the people were in trouble or sickness or needed special counsel.”<sup>1</sup>

This statement is quite untrue of the English colleges of the period ; but I quote it because it expresses a prevailing and entirely erroneous notion which is held also of the collegiate churches of Scotland. The cure of souls was at least one of the functions of the earliest type of collegiate church in England<sup>2</sup> ; but it was nowhere the object of the much later Scottish foundations. At Hamilton and Dumbarton, for instance, the chaplainries are expressly described as “ sine cura.”<sup>3</sup> When, as frequently happened, a parish church was made collegiate, one member of the college had charge of the parochial cure. At Dunbar, this duty devolved on the archpriest.<sup>4</sup> At Bothans, the provost was to pay from the fruits of the benefice of Bothans a chaplain who was to be a member of the college

<sup>1</sup> *Norwich Visitations*, p. ix.

<sup>2</sup> See *infra*.

<sup>3</sup> Theiner, *Vetera Monumenta*, p. 382 ; *CPR*, X, p. 624.

<sup>4</sup> Foundation-charter.

and serve in the parochial cure of souls.<sup>1</sup> The provost of Crail was to have a vicar-pensioner who was also to be a prebendary and president of the choir.<sup>2</sup> The third prebendary at Cullen was curate of the parish;<sup>3</sup> and, at Biggar, the eighth prebendary was vicar-pensioner and obliged to reside, sing and perform divine service with the other prebendaries except when occupied with the cure of the church and the administration of the sacraments to the parishioners.<sup>4</sup> At Guthrie, the provost was to exercise the cure of souls in person or by deputy, with the help of the canons in turn;<sup>5</sup> but this was a measure of economy, not of efficiency, to save the employment of a vicar. In the later burgh churches which became collegiate the vicar or curate who became provost or president continued to exercise the cure of souls, e.g., St. Nicholas', Aberdeen, had its provost-curate.<sup>6</sup> These facts suffice to indicate that in those collegiate churches, which were also parish churches—and I would remind you that there were collegiate churches which had no parish—ministration to the laity, far from being a primary concern, was at best an unavoidable necessity; and the extent to which these churches catered for their parishioners is shown at Crichton, where the surviving building has a choir and transepts, but the nave was never built. The aim of the founders and patrons was not to provide the ordinances of religion for all and sundry, but to have votive masses celebrated for themselves and their kin.

The notion that the collegiate churches were instituted to provide an improved and intensified cure of souls becomes fantastic when it is considered how often they held not only their own parochial revenues, but derived income from appropriated parish churches; for it would mean that one parish enjoyed increased pastoral efficiency by crippling the efficiency of others. When collegiate churches began to arise in Scotland in the fourteenth century, the custom of appropriating to monasteries and cathedrals the income of parish churches, which were thereafter served by a vicar or parochial chaplain, was already of long standing; and although an Act of Parliament of 6th May, 1471, which forbade further annexations of parish churches to bishoprics and monasteries, and ordered the restoration of any churches annexed since the beginning of James III's reign, made an exception in favour of benefices "to be vnyit to secular collegis fondit or to be fundit,"<sup>7</sup> and another Act

<sup>1</sup> *Yester Writs*, 55.

<sup>2</sup> *Reg. C. C. Crail*, p. 56.

<sup>3</sup> *Cramond, Church and Churchyard of Cullen*, p. 43 (Foundation-charter).

<sup>4</sup> *Spalding Club Misc.*, V, p. 301 (Foundation-charter).

<sup>5</sup> *CPR*, XIII, p. 137.

<sup>6</sup> *Cart. S. Nich.*, I, p. 221.

<sup>7</sup> *APS*, II, p. 99.

of similar import was passed in 1488,<sup>1</sup> the collegiate churches were exempted not because they had been blameless, but because they were, as the monasteries had once been, the vogue of the period ; and the king, as well as many of his nobles, was interested in their foundation. Gascoigne, in England, inveighed against the collegiate churches as encouraging the evil of appropriations and suggested that when a college was founded, it should be well endowed otherwise than by this means ;<sup>2</sup> and there is no doubt that in Scotland, likewise, the foundation of collegiate churches did nothing to mitigate, but rather increased the prevalence of a system which lowered the status and diminished the income of the parochial clergy, as both the rectorial and vicarage teinds were often appropriated and a vicar-pensioner, hired for a yearly fee, did the parochial duties. The detrimental effect of this is shown in the case of the rectory of Forteviot, which had been made a prebend of St. Salvator's College, St. Andrews, and from which twenty merks were assigned to the vicar-pensioner, with a croft and manse. Archbishop Forman, on the ground of the *magna animarum cura*, made the vicarage perpetual and awarded the vicar the full vicarage teinds.<sup>3</sup> In 1537, the vicar-pensioner of Crieff (appropriated to the Chapel Royal) successfully appealed for the increase of his yearly "pension" which was too small for his sustenance.<sup>4</sup> An instance from the Collegiate Church of Corstorphine indicates that in the desire to aggrandise the college, the cure of souls of an appropriated parish, which was to provide the incomes of additional prebendaries, was so ill provided for as to evoke protest from the parishioners. On 2nd January, 1450/1, Pope Nicholas V granted a supplication of William de Lauedre, lord of Hatton, and all the parishioners, which stated that on account of the separation of the teinds, great and small, belonging to the rectory and vicarage of Ratho, and their application to the Collegiate Church of Corstorphine, the church of Ratho, which had a great and populous parish, had been much weakened and neglected and that the cure of souls of the parishioners could ill be borne. The Pope, therefore, separated from the collegiate church the teinds which formerly belonged to the vicarage and assigned them for the portion of a vicar, who was again to be instituted in Ratho Church.<sup>5</sup> The collegiate churches could drive a hard bargain with the vicars of appropriated churches and saddle their already meagre incomes with burdensome charges. Thus, the Provost of the Collegiate Church of

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, II, p. 209.

<sup>2</sup> Hartridge, *Vicarages*, p. 189 *seq.*

<sup>3</sup> *Archbps. of St. Ands.*, II, pp. 259, 260 (from *Formulare*, 105).

<sup>4</sup> *Reg. Cap. Reg. Striv.*, 18.

<sup>5</sup> *CPR*, X, pp. 85-86.



Semple had £45 from the fruits of Glassford, and the vicar-pensioner of that parish had twenty merks Scots from which he had to pay procurations, synodals and other episcopal dues ;<sup>1</sup> while the vicar-pensioner of Lochorwart (the present parish of Borthwick), appointed by the Collegiate Church of Crichton, was obliged to maintain the choir of his church in roof and fabric, in ornaments and in bread, wine and lights.<sup>2</sup> The collegiate churches, far from being, as one ecstatic contributor to "the Scotsman" has said, "a practical effort towards ecclesiastical reform," seriously aggravated one of the worst evils attendant on the Medieval Church, the exploitation and impoverishment of parish churches and parish clergy.

## II

The emergence of collegiate churches in Scotland was not a "reform" ; it was the product of contemporary circumstances, but also a development with a long ancestry ; and to arrive at their significance, it is necessary to remember this : the institutions of the Roman Church did not grow up spontaneously on Scottish soil, but were transplanted there at a certain stage of their development ; the counterpart of political feudalism, they were introduced with it from England. It is to England, primarily, that we must look for the antecedents of the collegiate churches. I shall say something about the ancestry of their constitution ; and pass thereafter to consider the ancestry of their function.

"Collegiate churches," says Professor Hamilton Thompson, "are in their origin associations of priests attached to particular churches and leading a common life under certain rules. They are the result of a modified application of the monastic system to the lives of secular priests, to whom the name of *canonici* or canons is given because they were subject to a rule or constitution. Such bodies naturally grew up in connection with important churches. . . . The organization of the life of canons under a fixed rule by St. Chrodegang, bishop of Metz (742-766), to which reference is sometimes made as if it were the original model of cathedral and collegiate chapters was actually an attempt to give a definitely regular character to collections of secular clerks whose corporate existence was not yet settled. The ultimate outcome of such endeavours was the growth of the orders of canons-regular, which did not appear in England until the twelfth century. On the other hand, if the origin of the oldest secular chapters in England is to be traced to monastic establishments of a somewhat

<sup>1</sup> Foundation-charter (Semple).

<sup>2</sup> *Coll. Chs. of Midlothian*, p. 307.

indefinite character, their distinctively monastic character disappears early. It is possible that the popular survival of the term "minster" (*monasterium*) in such cases as York, Beverley, Ripon and Southwell may refer to the foundation as monasteries of churches which afterwards became secular. While, however, in the Church of England, at an early period, there was probably no hard and fast distinction between regular monasteries and clerical corporations of a less rigorous kind, it is certain that no assuredly monastic beginning can be claimed for any of these minsters. The tendency, at any rate, of such foundations was rather to depart from a likeness to the monastic life than to aim towards it; and while it is not improbable that the movement of which the rule of St. Chrodegang was a symptom had some influence in determining details of their common life and the distribution of their property, there is no indication that they were affected by peculiarly monastic ideals . . ."<sup>1</sup>

It has been further suggested that the minster or college of secular priests serving a wide area was, at one stage, the normal type of English ecclesiastical foundation before the emergence of the parochial or manorial church with its one incumbent;<sup>2</sup> and that the term "church" was, indeed, confined to collegiate churches, secular or monastic, because only a collegiate body could exercise discipline, only a body which included deacons as well as priests could administer ecclesiastical property,<sup>3</sup> only where there were several priests could the offices of the dead be performed.<sup>4</sup> But the period of the Conquest was to bring about a momentous change. With the rise of parochial churches, the area of ministration of the old collegiate churches was restricted and a community of priests no longer needed. Already in the reign of Edward the Confessor, minsters had been granted to monasteries and episcopal sees at home and abroad; and with the passing of their endowments into the hands of the monasteries, the desire to serve these churches at the cheapest rate led to the system of vicarages. Instances of the transformation of collegiate churches into monasteries are also found, e.g., King Harold's foundation for a dean and twelve canons at Waltham became, after the Conquest, an abbey.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Notes on Colleges of Secular Canons in England," *Archaeol. Journal*, LXXIV, pp. 139-141.

<sup>2</sup> W. Page, "Some Remarks on the Churches of the Domesday Survey," *Archaeologia*, 66, pp. 66-67, 79, 93, 102.

<sup>3</sup> There is a curious survival of this in the constitution of the Collegiate Church of Tain.

<sup>4</sup> O. J. Reichel, "Church and Church Endowments in 11th and 12th Cents.," *Trans. Devonshire Assoc.*, XXXIX, 363, 4.

<sup>5</sup> Freeman, *Norman Conquest*, II, p. 439 *seq.*

These were symptoms of the growing power of the monastic orders, which, favoured by the Normans and allied with feudalism, attained eventually a dominating position in the English Church. The secular colleges did not entirely disappear; but those which remained—the larger collegiate churches of the “cathedral” type, like Ripon, Beverley and Southwell—survived in isolation from the main trend of ecclesiastical development. Thus it is that they had no counterpart in Scotland. When, in the period of David I, Scotland became anglicised, feudalised and romanised, of the new ecclesiastical institutions, diocesan episcopacy, the parochial system, Roman monasticism, the last was by far the most influential. The early Middle Ages in Scotland is *par excellence* the period characterised by the foundation of abbeys and priories up and down the land. Yet it was principally through these monasteries, linked to and colonised from houses in England and France, that influences formative of the collegiate churches were transmitted.

At this point, we may go back to consider the ancestry of the function which is characteristic of the Scottish collegiate churches—the maintenance of votive masses and prayers—and trace, somewhat summarily, the usages which sprang from the belief in Purgatory and in the efficacy of prayers and especially of masses offered by the living for the dead. I cannot discuss here the antiquity of these usages—the evidence is given in such works as Boggis’ *Praying for the Dead* and Molinier’s *Les obituaires français*—but must be content to indicate the salient points of their development.

These usages centred at an early date in the custom of observing “anniversaries.” Masses and prayers for the dead were repeated at certain fixed dates; according to Martene, on the third, seventh and fortieth days or, sometimes, on the third, ninth and fortieth days and on the actual anniversary of their death.<sup>1</sup> These so-called “anniversaries” were, as Molinier puts it, both “collective” and “individual.” Of the first type were the anniversaries observed by a religious community for its departed brethren, a custom mentioned in the *Penitential* of Theodore, Archbishop of Canterbury (668-690):

“On the next day (after the burial) and on the third and ninth and also on the thirtieth, mass is said for them and, further, the anniversary is kept, if desired.”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Quoted J. G. Nicholls, “Precatory or Mortuary Rolls,” *Memoirs, etc., of Norfolk (Archaeol. Inst.)*, p. 101. The Eastern Church had a similar custom: “Masses for the dead were celebrated, according to an ordinance of 539, on the third, the sixth and the fortieth day” (B. J. Kidd, *Churches of Eastern Christendom*, p. 73).

<sup>2</sup> Boggis, *Praying for the Dead*, p. 129 seq. The method of such a commemoration is laid down in a statute of the Prior and convent of Durham (1214) (*Hist. Dunelm. Script. Tres.*, App., p. xxxvi (No. XXIX).)



But this custom was significantly extended by the growth of "spiritual associations." One religious community undertook to observe the anniversaries of the members of another community as well as its own, e.g., the monks of St. Benignus of Dijon contract with the monks of St. Remigius of Rheims, in 1174, "pro defunctis vero illorum facimus sicut pro nostris";<sup>1</sup> and similar contracts for mutual observance were made in the same century by Durham with Glastonbury, Selby, Whitby and Bardney;<sup>2</sup> by Durham with Dunfermline;<sup>3</sup> between Carlisle and Holyrood;<sup>4</sup> and, in 1178, between Kelso and Arbroath.<sup>5</sup> In some cases, the contract between two monasteries extended to all their dependent houses, indeed, to their whole orders. Thus, a letter of Peter, Abbot of Cluny, intimates that on the death of a brother of the Carthusian order, an office and conventual mass will be celebrated at Cluny and likewise in the other Cluniac congregations; and a similar letter is sent from Chartreux to Cluny.<sup>6</sup> Again, there are arrangements for the interchange of prayers between secular and regular canons; about 1135, such a contract was made between the provost and canons of Beverley (a collegiate church) and the canons of Bridlington.<sup>7</sup> The "individual" anniversary appears in the ninth century, e.g., in the case cited by Molinier of the capitulary of Aix-la-Chapelle: "Ut pro abbate defuncto anniversarium fiat officium";<sup>8</sup> and other instances are given by Bede. In the twelfth century, Durham undertook to commemorate after their decease John, Abbot of Kelso; Alan, monk of Melrose, and Efrard, monk of Newbattle;<sup>9</sup> and—a most significant fact—not only ecclesiastics, regular or secular, but layfolk who were admitted to this privilege, e.g., Robert, Earl of Leicester, and his countess, Alexander, King of Scotland, and his sister, Matilda.<sup>10</sup> The custom of commemorating lay founders and benefactors of a community can be instanced in the tenth century;<sup>11</sup> but a new value came to be set on spiritual association as a consequence of the belief in the special sanctity of the "religious" life and the special virtue of

<sup>1</sup> Mabillon, *Vet. Anal.*, p. 159.

<sup>2</sup> *Excerpta ex obituario Eccl. Dunelm.* (10), p. 136.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* (14), p. 137.

<sup>4</sup> *Lib. S. Crucis*, p. cxxxv.

<sup>5</sup> *Aberbrothoc*, I, 2.

<sup>6</sup> Mabillon, *Vet. Anal.*, p. 159.

<sup>7</sup> *Reg. Archbp. Henry of Newark*, pp. 231-232.

<sup>8</sup> *Les obituaires français*, p. 28.

<sup>9</sup> *Excerpta ex obit. Eccl. Dunelm.*, p. 139.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 142-143.

<sup>11</sup> Molinier, p. 118.



monastic masses and prayers.<sup>1</sup> *Fraternitas* became a privilege to be conferred upon layfolk for favours bestowed and to be sought by them as enhancing the welfare of their souls. Innumerable letters of fraternity were granted by the monasteries throughout the Middle Ages—between 1314 and 1534, nearly two hundred are recorded at Durham alone;<sup>2</sup> and the nature of this privilege is illustrated—to take an example at random—by the charter of Henry of Brechin, granting twenty shillings to Lindores Abbey, which declares :

“ Both I and my wife Juliana will and concede that at our death our bodies shall be borne to Lindores for burial because we have chosen a place of sepulture there as those who have been received in full chapter into fraternity of that house and participation in all prayers and benefits which are done therein.”<sup>3</sup>

Further, the motive of grants in alms to monasteries is described in hundreds of charters in some such form as “ for the weal (*salus*) of my soul and the soul of my wife, the souls of my father and mother, ancestors and successors ” ; and it is specified in such grants that the monks will hold lands free of secular service and on the sole condition of offering prayers for the donor, as when David I, in 1144, gave Lesmahagow to Kelso with the stipulation “ *solas orationes ad salutem animarum exsolvendo.* ”<sup>4</sup> The monasteries, in short, came to be regarded as large-scale praying societies by whose intercessions layfolk were privileged to profit and in whose merits they were privileged to share.<sup>5</sup>

We may pause here to note the features characteristic at a later time of the collegiate churches which came to light in these monastic usages. Anniversaries were, of course, perpetuated in the *obits* of the founders

<sup>1</sup> “ There can be no doubt that of the three main duties of the religious houses (prayers, hospitality, alms), the prayers counted first with the ordinary layman ” (Baskerville, *English Monks and the Suppression of the Monasteries*, p. 19). “ Men sought the prayers of the monks of Cluny with such eagerness that in charity to the souls of the dead, Odilo sanctioned an annual day of prayer for them to be observed by all the houses under him on 2 November, the day following All Saints’ Day. The observance of All Souls’ Day by the private prayers and masses of the Cluniac monks finally became general in the Church ” (Deanesly, *Hist. of Med. Church*, p. 96).

<sup>2</sup> Raine, *Obituary Roll of Wm. Ebchester*, pp. 107-120. See *ibid.*, pp. xxxv, 107, for information on the nature of these letters.

<sup>3</sup> *Lindores*, LX.

<sup>4</sup> *Early Scottish Charters*, p. 134. Cf. *Lindores*, CXV.

<sup>5</sup> I cannot in the space of this paper discuss the bearing of the idea of merit on the collegiate churches.

which were observed by the collegiate clergy ; and the collegiate churches adopted the monastic custom of recording the names of those whose anniversaries were to be observed in a " martyrology "—the term was due to the fact that the list of *obits* was usually written in the same book as the martyrology properly so-called. Thus, Maldouene, Earl of Lennox, granting in recognition of fraternity four oxen to the abbey of Arbroath, desires that :

" my name and the name of Aveleth my brother should be written in their martyrology so that every year on our anniversary we are absolved in their chapter."<sup>1</sup>

Compare the stipulation of the founder of the Collegiate Church of Dunbar that

" his obit be written in their martyrology or another book and for ever read in their chapter once a year and then solemn vigils and a mass on the morrow shall be held for his soul."<sup>2</sup>

Further, the form of the anniversaries is noteworthy. Durham undertook to hold, on the death of John, Abbot of Kelso, a full service *in conventu*. The priests of the monastery were to celebrate fifty masses for him ; those in minor orders to say fifty psalms ; the rest fifty *Paternosters* and *Misereres*.<sup>3</sup> The use of the *Placebo* and *Dirige* is mentioned contemporaneously ;<sup>4</sup> and a significant detail appears at St. Benignus', Dijon, where the commemorative offices and masses were followed by the distribution to a dozen poor persons of a meal of bread, meat and wine, a similar custom being in vogue at Cluny on the Tuesday after Trinity.<sup>5</sup> Monastic custom, as has been mentioned in Part I of this paper, suggested the charitable activities of the collegiate churches.<sup>6</sup>

### III

The immediate link between these monastic usages and the usages of the secular colleges of the Scottish type is supplied by the inauguration

<sup>1</sup> *Aberbrothoc*, I, 133.

<sup>2</sup> Foundation-charter. Martyrologies were kept not only by monasteries and collegiate churches, but by cathedrals and the larger burgh churches. See *Reg. Ep. Aberd.*, II, p. 2 *seq.*, for the obit-book of Aberdeen Cathedral ; and *Reg. Ep. Glasg.*, II, 545 for Glasgow ; also *Obit Book of St. John Baptist, Ayr*.

<sup>3</sup> *Excerpta ex Obit. Dunelm.* (26), p. 138.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 139.

<sup>5</sup> Molinier, *Les obituaires français*, p. 27. Other instances appear at Durham (*Hist. Dunelm. Script. Tres.*, App., pp. xlv, xlix). Pittances were also granted to monks in connection with anniversaries, e.g., at Balmerino, c. 1233 (*Balmorinach*, 19).

<sup>6</sup> On the connection of almsgiving and the idea of merit see Troeltsch, *Social Teaching*, I, p. 136.

of chantries. These were the result of endowments for the employment of a priest (or group of priests), regular or secular, to offer masses and prayers for the welfare of souls at an altar in an abbey church or, latterly and exclusively by seculars, in a cathedral or parish church or in a chapel set apart for that purpose. The two earliest Scottish instances appear to be at Melrose, to which, between 1153 and 1165, Walter the Steward granted four carucates of the land of Edmundiston, declaring :

“ And these I grant and give on this condition that the aforesaid monks build an altar in their church at which they will appoint three priests who in all time coming will celebrate mass for the soul of my lord the king and his ancestors and successors, etc.”<sup>1</sup> and at Dryburgh, to which about the same time (c. 1153) Thomas de London granted the church of Lessudden with the proviso :

“ The parson of the church will set up an altar in honour of St. Margaret the virgin on the south side of the church, and every week have a mass sung for the souls of my lord king David, Margaret, his wife, and all the faithful dead.”<sup>2</sup> Again, c. 1174-1199, William de Hunum grants the lands of Raeshaw to Melrose and stipulates that

“ the monks . . . will find a chaplain after my decease and my wife’s who will celebrate masses for ever for our souls and for all named in this charter and for all the faithful departed in a certain chapel which . . . I have built within the aforesaid bounds ”<sup>3</sup> and, in 1214, one of the two chaplains appointed by the Prior of Durham to Coldingham is to celebrate

“ every day for ever for the dead with the Commendation, *Placebo* and *Dirige*. . . This chaplain will celebrate specially for the soul of Master Roger de Melsanby, canon of Beverley, who conferred much goods on the house of Coldingham ; for the souls of all monks at rest at Coldingham ; and for the souls of the fathers and mothers of all dwelling there ; and for their debtors and all the faithful departed.”<sup>4</sup> Chantries of the various types gradually increased. They were founded in monasteries, e.g., at Lindores, in 1248, where a monk is to be chaplain ;<sup>5</sup> in 1253, in the chapel of Osbernistun ;<sup>6</sup> in 1277, at the altar of St. John the Evangelist in St. Nicholas’ Church, Aberdeen ;<sup>7</sup> and before 1295, in

<sup>1</sup> *Melros*, I, 4.

<sup>2</sup> *Dryburgh*, 58.

<sup>3</sup> *Melros*, I, 131.

<sup>4</sup> *Priory of Coldingham*, pp. 239-240.

<sup>5</sup> *Lindores*, XLI.

<sup>6</sup> *Reg. Ep. Glasg.*, I, p. 162.

<sup>7</sup> *Cart. S. Nich.*, II, XIV.



Glasgow Cathedral, by Devorgilla, mother of John Balliol, for the maintenance of four chaplains celebrating for her soul and the soul of her predecessors and successors.<sup>1</sup> Secular chantries became very frequent from the fourteenth century onwards ; and in these chantries, endowed for the celebration of masses with special intentions, is the nucleus of the collegiate churches. Such churches of the prevailing Scottish type were chantry colleges, whether the foundation was collegiate from its outset or whether the college was superimposed on a parish church or whether it meant the reorganisation under statutes of priests serving a chantry chapel ; they were incorporations of chantry priests and the motive of these incorporations was to secure the multiplication, specialisation, continuity and perpetuity of soul-masses and prayers. The desire for continuity explains the insistence of the founders that the clergy should be resident. In the older English collegiate churches of the "cathedral" type intercession for the dead was a duty *inter alia*. In the later English and in the Scottish chantry colleges,<sup>2</sup> it was the paramount concern, their primary function, to which all the other features grafted upon their constitution, e.g., schools and hospitals, were subsidiary.

#### IV

How, then, are we to explain the rise of the Scottish collegiate churches in the later Middle Ages ? I have noted the tributary influences of earlier centuries ; I pass to consider contemporary factors.

(I) The rise of these churches is a symptom of the reaction against Monasticism which marked that period. The decline of the Scottish monasteries set in after the War of Independence ; the stream of endowments began to fail ; the prestige of the monasteries declined ; they were no longer to be cultivated by the Crown for their social and political consequence—in 1425, James I could address a letter of protest to Augustinian and Benedictine houses demanding their reformation ;<sup>3</sup> bishops were no longer cowed by their immunities, and one of the first acts of Patrick Graham, on becoming Archbishop of St. Andrews, was to

<sup>1</sup> *Reg. Ep. Glasg.*, I, p. 212.

<sup>2</sup> Also in France. "C'est surtout à la fin du moyen âge qu'on voit paraître ces chapitres inférieurs, ces collegiales, dont bien peu d'ailleurs eurent une existence brillante. Ce fut une mode chez les princes français d'instituer une congrégation chargée de la garde des tombeaux de la famille et de la célébration de pompeux anniversaires" (Molinier, *Obituaires*, p. 127).

<sup>3</sup> MacEwen, *History*, I, p. 337.



cancel the exemption from episcopal authority of Kelso and Holyrood ;<sup>1</sup> the barons and lairds were concerned not so much to patronise as to exploit them. Some monasteries, e.g., the nunneries of South Berwick and St. Evoca in Galloway disappeared ; some, like Urquhart and Fyvie, were merged in larger houses ; one, at least (Lincluden) became a collegiate church ; Inchmahome and Restennet were appropriated to the Chapel Royal and James V proposed to annex to it the abbey of Tongland.<sup>2</sup> In 1472, the monks at Coldingham were two in number ;<sup>3</sup> and the administration and revenues of many religious houses passed into the hands of Commendators. But over and above these signs of decadence, there are evidences of the waning of the belief in the peculiar sanctity of the "religious" life and the special value of the monks' prayers. Pinkerton declares :

"The wealth of the monks had rendered them voluptuous, illiterate and remiss in their duties so that the masses for the founders appear to have been uncelebrated. Hence a new species of religious foundations became fashionable in the fifteenth (*sic*) century, that of collegiate churches."<sup>4</sup>

The vogue of these churches was, however, not so much a reaction following upon monastic negligence—which, in any case, with a multiplicity of mass-contracts and a decline in numbers, was inevitable. It indicated a preference for the performance by secular priests of what was virtually reckoned the most important duty of the clergy—the offering of masses for the dead ; it amounted to an admission that their prayers and masses were of as much avail as the prayers and masses of the religious. That the collegiate churches and cathedrals had come to be popularly regarded as praying societies on the same footing as the monasteries is shown by the terms of the will of Alexander Sutherland of Dunbeath (15 Nov., 1456), who left an annual rent of £10 for a priest to sing perpetually for his soul in Roslin Collegiate Church and six merks to the (regular) canons of Fearn for a daily *requiem* mass for his soul, who provides also for thirty trentals to be said for his soul, eight in the "Chanonre," i.e. the Cathedral of Ross, four at the abbey of Fearn, four at the Collegiate Church of Tain, four at Dornoch Cathedral, four at the abbey of Kinloss and six at Orkney

<sup>1</sup> Theiner, *Vet. Mon.*, pp. 470-471.

<sup>2</sup> *Tynningham Letter Book*, GRH.

<sup>3</sup> Theiner, *op. cit.*, p. 472.

<sup>4</sup> *Hist. of Scotland*, I, v, p. 178. The attitude of a Scottish magnate is shown by a letter of the Earl of March (c. 1417) *à propos* of lands held of him by Coldingham: "for the quhilk thay shuld find thre monkys syngand outhir in Coldynghame or Durame and als lange as thay do that thay sal hafe the possessions still" (*Priory of Coldingham*, CII).

Cathedral.<sup>1</sup> The testator, characteristically, was concerned with the quantity of the suffrages for his soul ; their quality is not differentiated. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the monasteries, fallen on evil days, came in popular regard to count for less and less as praying societies ; the burgesses, growing as a class in political importance, preferred to endow chantries in their parish churches ; and whereas it is stated of the English monasteries which were surrendering themselves in 1539 that " the abbays are now nothing pitied, the commons perceiving more conveniences to grow from their suppression. Saving that they lose their prayers,"<sup>2</sup>

the Scottish " commons " made no such reservation in their attitude to the downfall of the monasteries. It is, however, to be noted that the friars were excepted from the general indifference or aversion to the religious<sup>3</sup> and chantries continued to be founded in their churches ; and the same is true of the abbey of Holyrood, which fell in with the fashion of the period to the extent of founding the Collegiate Church of St. Mary in the Fields.<sup>4</sup>

(2) An accentuated concern for souls in Purgatory coupled with the development of a " mechanical " view of the Eucharist. It is impossible here to trace the growth and influence of the doctrine of Purgatory which, in some form, was presupposed by the offering of votive masses and prayers ; it must suffice to note that this doctrine was one of the chief matters at issue between East and West at the Council of Ferrara (1438) ; and the compromise reached at the Council of Florence (1439) and promulgated in the Bull *Laetentur Coeli*, on 6 July of that year, declared that those who die penitent in the love of God are purified after death by the pains of Purgatory, and that they derive comfort in these pains from the suffrages of the faithful on earth and also by the sacrifice of the mass, prayers, alms and other works of piety.<sup>5</sup> The latter clause was that specially stressed by the Roman Church. Now, whereas the securing of the welfare of souls in Purgatory is merely indicated as the motive of earlier benefactions, in the period of the collegiate churches it is often expressly stated. Thus, in 1528, Gavin Dunbar, Bishop of Aberdeen, in terms of the last will and testament of Edward Stewart, Bishop of Orkney, arranges for certain chaplainries to be founded

<sup>1</sup> *Bannatyne Misc.*, III, p. 96.

<sup>2</sup> Baskerville, *English Monks and the Suppression*, p. 19 (cf. pp. 56-57), who states also, in answer to the question : What losses did the suppression involve ? that " to contemporaries the loss of prayers came first " (*ibid.*, p. 276).

<sup>3</sup> cf. *Ibid.*, p. 227.

<sup>4</sup> *ADC*, xxxiv, f. 8. Cambuskenneth was also responsible for founding the college of St. Ninian's (*RMS*, III, 601).

<sup>5</sup> Landon, *Councils*, I, p. 278.

"because they believe that by devout and continuous prayers, especially masses, where the Son of God is offered for sins, sins are remitted and the pains of Purgatory destroyed and souls set free to enjoy the delights of Paradise."<sup>1</sup>

Likewise, the prebendaries of the Collegiate Church of Crail bind themselves, on 16 Dec., 1536, to celebrate votive masses for certain named persons "and for all the faithful dead in the pains of Purgatory."<sup>2</sup>

On the other hand, the period from the thirteenth century onwards saw a greatly increased vogue of and, indeed, traffic in private votive masses, due to what Miss Evelyn Underhill has called

"the change of emphasis which stressed the propitiatory and sacrificial character of the mass to the exclusion of the oblation and communion of the people."

This writer adds :

"The unfortunate development of the private and votive mass, commissioned for a particular purpose and paid for at an agreed rate, brought with it a further degradation of Christian worship. For here the Eucharistic sacrifice was offered, not as part of the total and disinterested oblation of the whole Church, 'in and for all,' but to obtain for those on whose behalf it was celebrated a remission of penalties or a granting of boons, which easily came to be regarded as dependent on the number of masses said and the amount of fees paid."<sup>3</sup>

Of the multiplication of masses, due to this

"widespread belief in the quantitative, assignable and . . . marketable value of each mass, coupled with a belief in a penal purgatory (on which) the popular religion of calculation and fear was based,"<sup>4</sup>

there is no Scottish instance comparable to that cited in a letter from the Archbishop of York to Edward I (7 June, 1291) informing him that 47,528 masses had been celebrated in his diocese for the soul of Queen Eleanor.<sup>5</sup> But it will be obvious how the growth of this crude and popular conception of the Eucharist led to the foundation of chantries and that "the increase of divine worship," mentioned as the motive of many donations to the Church, was something more than "common form." The prevalence of this conception likewise explains why those responsible for these foundations seem to display no interest in religion apart from this self-centred concern for the welfare of their souls.

<sup>1</sup> *Laing Charters*, 368.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 412.

<sup>3</sup> *Worship*, pp. 260-261 (cf. pp. 149-150).

<sup>4</sup> Kidd, *Later Med. Doctrine of Euch. Sacrifice*, p. 36.

<sup>5</sup> *Reg. of Archbp. John le Romeyn*, 85.



"Men would readily welcome," it has been said, "a system which released them from the necessity of religious observance in person or in this life and enabled them to get it done by proxy or even in the next (life)."<sup>1</sup>

(3) The pessimistic outlook of the later Middle Ages. It was a period which saw the Great Schism in the Church, the recurrence of war and devastation<sup>2</sup> and awesome visitations of pestilence. "The world," says Salembier, "terrified and stricken by the concurrence of so many evils seemed sunk in despair."<sup>3</sup> Then, as once more to-day, men were oppressed by a sense of the precariousness of life; above all, as a result of the ravages of the Black Death, which is said to have appeared in Scotland in 1350<sup>4</sup> after it had swept England, Wales and Ireland and to have slain a full third of the people, while the mortality among the clergy caused a shortage of priests.<sup>5</sup> The collegiate churches were directly affected by such a national calamity as the Battle of Flodden at which four of their founders and at least six of their patrons were among the slain. The *obit* of one of the latter—Sir Alexander Guthrie of that ilk at the Collegiate Church of Guthrie—is recorded;<sup>6</sup> and the fallen were to be commemorated at a chantry founded in St. Giles.<sup>7</sup> "Timor mortis conturbat me," the refrain of Dunbar's well-known verses, may have been a *cliché*;<sup>8</sup> yet Dunbar, the greatest of medieval Scottish poets, gave authentic enough expression to the mind of his times when he wrote:

"No state in Erd here standis sicker;  
As with the wynd wavis the wicker  
So wannis this worldis vanitie:—  
*Timor mortis conturbat me.*

"He takis the campion in the stour,  
The captain closit in the tour,  
The lady in bour full of bewtie:—  
*Timor mortis conturbat me."*

<sup>1</sup> Kidd, *Later Med. Doctrine of Euch. Sac.*, p. 73.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Troeltsch, *Social Teaching*, I, p. 252.

<sup>3</sup> *Le grand schisme d'occident*, p. 189.

<sup>4</sup> *Extracta ex var. cron. Scocie*, p. 249; Hume Brown, *History*, I, p. 176.

<sup>5</sup> *CPR*, I, p. 476 (the year 1364).

<sup>6</sup> *Scottish Antiquary*, XIII, p. 101.

<sup>7</sup> *Reg. S. Egid.*, p. 227. The *Obit Bk. of St. John Baptist, Ayr* (p. 5) records a commemoration for a burgess killed at Flodden. On 8 June, 1543, the church of Peebles was made collegiate "for the prosperous state . . . of all those who have died for the defence of the realm of Scotland" (*RMS*, III, 2921).

<sup>8</sup> The phrase, as is noted by Dr. Mackay Mackenzie, comes from the Responsorium in the 7th Lesson in the Office for the Dead and occurs in Lydgate. The Editor of Lydgate's *Minor Poems* (E.E.T.S.) notes there are at least three other poems with this refrain. It is quoted in the preamble to the 15th century "*Obituary Roll of Wm. Ebchester*, etc." (p. 1) and attributed to Job; but it does not occur in the Vulgate Book of Job.



## V

So far of the influences that fostered the rise of the collegiate churches; it remains to mention the factors that contributed to their eclipse. These churches, although one of them (Biggar) was founded by a staunch Catholic when the Reformation was in sight, participated in the general decadence of the Roman Church in Scotland. In particular, the disruptive tendencies which Leach detects in the English collegiate churches appear also in those of Scotland:

“One of the most striking features in the history of the collegiate churches is that no sooner had their constitution been firmly established than it, at once, began to fall to pieces.”<sup>1</sup>

This, he declares, was the outcome of devolving duties on substitutes, a practice which was in vogue at St. Mary's-on-the-Rock, St. Andrews, in 1425,<sup>2</sup> at Dunbar “prout in multis aliis collegiatis ecclesiis regni Scocie” before 1501,<sup>3</sup> and at Corstorphine, where the patrons drew the attention of Cardinal Beaton to the fact that the provost and certain prebendaries did not reside but employed unqualified substitutes.<sup>4</sup> Non-residence, with its consequent makeshifts and negligence, constantly impaired the collegiate system from within; and it remained an irremediable evil.

In England, a concerted attack on the doctrine of Purgatory heralded the dissolution of the colleges. To quote Baskerville:

“The campaign undertaken by the government against the doctrine of Purgatory . . . was aimed at the religious houses. In the well-known words of Bishop Latimer, ‘the founding of monasteries argueth purgatory to be, so the putting down of them argueth it not to be’ ”;<sup>5</sup>

and the pretext for the suppression of the monasteries was that which later was to justify the suppression of the chantries; witness the statute of Edward VI (1547):

“A great part of superstition and errors in Christian religion has been brought into the minds and estimations of men by reason of the ignorance of their very true and perfect salvation through the death of Jesus Christ and by devising and phantasying vain opinions of purgatory and masses to be done for them which be departed, the which doctrine and vain opinion by nothing more is maintained and

<sup>1</sup> *Southwell Visitns.*, p. xlii.

<sup>2</sup> *Reg. Prior. S. And.*, p. 408.

<sup>3</sup> *Reg. Cap. Reg. Striv.*, p. 4.

<sup>4</sup> *Archbps. of St. Ands.*, IV, p. 242 seq.

<sup>5</sup> *English Monks and the Suppression*, p. 21.

upholden than by the abuse of trentals, chantries and other provisions of the said blindness and ignorance."<sup>1</sup>

But, in Scotland, the order of this statute—"vain opinions of purgatory and masses . . ."—might have been reversed. No doubt, Lutheran influences among the earlier Reformers had made for the denial of Purgatory; this was, for instance, one of the charges against James Hamilton of Kincavel in 1534.<sup>2</sup> But the principal and characteristic emphasis in the Scottish Reformation was on the abuse of the mass. Lord Eustace Percy, in his recent work on Knox, has made this plain:

"The mass was a fraudulent conversion of spiritual truth to the uses of public power and private profit. As such it must be destroyed. . . . Idolatry, idolatry, idolatry, this was the word on which he (Knox) must harp. . . . In Knox's eyes, the mass-priest had usurped and discredited the function reserved by Christ for Himself alone. To him, Christ was above all else the Mediator between God and man. . . . It was the priest's claim to share in this office of intercession that Knox was therefore most concerned to deny . . ."<sup>3</sup>

Although the Assembly of 21 December, 1560, decided that the Collegiate Church of Restalrig "as monument of Idolatry, be razed and utterly casten doune and destroyed,"<sup>4</sup> the collegiate churches, as a whole, ceased to function not as a result of specific and prohibitive legislation directed against them by Church or State, but simply because the abolition and outlawry of the mass *ipso facto* terminated their career. In England, the dissolution of the chantries was not accomplished without opposition, e.g., in 1548, a local insurrection in Yorkshire, involving about three thousand people, issued in the murder of a receiver of chantry lands and his three associates, and led to the execution of the leaders of the revolt at York in the following year.<sup>5</sup> Paradoxically, the fact that there was no such outburst of popular resentment in Scotland reveals one of the more revolutionary features of the Reformation. Nothing is more remarkable than how quickly and how completely the dominant religious interest of the later Middle Ages gave way; and the aversion to the observances which had arisen from it is manifest in the antipathy of the Reformed Church to any form of religious service at the burial of the dead.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Gee and Hardy, *Docs. Illust. of Hist. of English Church*, p. 328.

<sup>2</sup> *Letters and Papers, Henry VIII*, VII, 1184.

<sup>3</sup> *John Knox*, pp. 62-64.

<sup>4</sup> *BUK*, p. 3.

<sup>5</sup> *Yorkshire Chantry Surveys*, II, p. xvi.

<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, the word "dregy" was used (=funeral) in Scotland till the 18th century. See Galt, *Annals of the Parish*.

It only remains to add a word about the fate of the collegiate churches. As compared with the monasteries and with the exception of Restalrig (mentioned above) and St. Mary's-on-the-Rock, St. Andrews, which was "pulled down" in 1559,<sup>1</sup> they suffered comparatively little harm at the time of the Reformation. Many continued as parish churches; the University colleges were reformed and remain to this day. The endowments of the collegiate churches were utilised to develop what had always been one of their subsidiary concerns—education. It is noticeable that for a considerable period after the Reformation appointments to their prebends and chaplainries continue to be made. This is explained by the fact that an Act of Parliament of 1567 provided that

"for the encouragement of learning, all patrounis hauand prouestreis or prebendareis of collegis, altarageis or chaplaneris, at thair gifts and dispositioun, may in all tyme cuming at thair plesour present the samin to ane bursar, quhom thay pleis to name, to studie vertew and letteris within ane college of any of the universiteis of this Realme";<sup>2</sup> and in this the Reformed Church concurred.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Lesley, *Historie*, p. 273.

<sup>2</sup> *APS*, III, p. 25.

<sup>3</sup> *BUK*, pp. 86, 116.

